

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend paragraph [0029] as follows:

[0029] According to one or more embodiments, the coupling element 1412 includes a second bore 36 adapted provide an opening to receive a spinal rod 38 through the bore. The second bore 36 has a longitudinal axis that is substantially transverse to the longitudinal axis of the first bore 14. In these embodiments, a second locking element 40 is provided and is adapted to secure the spinal rod in the second bore. Figures 5 and 6 show additional details of the second locking element 40. The second locking element 40 is preferably in the form a set screw. The second locking element 40 includes a hexagonal shaped opening which is adapted to receive an end of a hexagonal driver for turning the second locking element 40. The second locking element 40 further preferably includes external threads 42 for engagement with complementary internal 43 threads on the surface of the second bore 36. The rod receiving opening and second locking element are thus adapted to capture and seat an orthopedic stabilizing rod therein. In preferred embodiments, both the first and second locking elements 22, 40 are permanently seated in the coupling element 12 such that the locking elements cannot be inadvertently removed from the coupling element. Inadvertent removal of the locking element 40 can be accomplished by providing a flared portion or lip 41 on the end of the locking element opposite the tool engagement surface. A shoulder 45 associated with the respective bore of the coupling element prevents removal of the locking element 40. The flared portion or lip 41 has a diameter that is greater than the threaded portion of the locking element 40. The shoulder 45 associated with the bore 36 provides an opening in the bore 36 that is greater than the diameter of the threaded portion of the locking element 40, but smaller than the diameter of the flared portion or lip 41 on the locking element 40. Thus, when the

locking element is turned in a direction to back the locking element out of the bore 36, the shoulder 45 and flared portion or lip 41 prevent the locking element 40 from coming out of the bore 36. Although the shoulder 45 and flared portion or lip 41 are shown with respect to the second bore 36, it will be understood that such a structure can be used with respect to the first bore 14 to prevent inadvertent removal of the locking nut 24 from the first bore. It will be understood, of course, that other means and structures can be used to prevent inadvertent removal or pre-assembly of the locking element 40 and locking nut 24 in their respective bores. For example, the locking element and/or locking nut could be press fit into the bores and friction locked to prevent inadvertent removal. Alternatively, detents on the surfaces of the bores or the locking nut and locking element could be utilized to prevent inadvertent removal of the locking element or locking nut.